



Former Manufactured Gas Plant Project 5th & Hill Streets – Champaign, IL

Illinois EPA Fact Sheet #1 May, 2008: Answers to Citizens' Questions

For almost 20 years, the Illinois EPA has been overseeing the investigation and cleanup of the plant at 5th & Hill Streets in Champaign that made gas from coal from the late 1800s to the 1950s. Recently, some questions have been raised about whether the site could be a health hazard for its neighbors or for children who might get through the fence and play on the property. The Illinois EPA got a formal request for signs on the site fence "warning of contamination or some indication of hazard due to contamination."

Two investigations are aimed at answering these questions:

Outside the fence: Starting in early April, the utility, AmerenIP, has been taking soil and groundwater samples from properties surrounding the site. These samples will show any areas where contamination has spread from the site. Experts at the Illinois EPA and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) will then make sure whether there is a health hazard for any of the neighbors. AmerenIP expects to have a complete report of its off-site investigation in late June or early July. Fact Sheets summarizing the results will be sent to residents, officials, and news media at that time. The company will also host an Open House to give people a chance to comment and get answers to their questions.

Inside the fence: To answer questions about the need for warning signs on the fenced area, toxicologists from the Illinois EPA and IDPH did separate Risk Assessments for contact with the soils inside the fence. In early May, the Agency took 10 new samples of surface soils inside the fenced area. The toxicologists studied these samples along with five samples taken earlier by AmerenIP to decide whether any children who got inside the fence would be at risk. Each analysis showed no significant health hazard from exposure to the low levels of contaminants in surface soils. In the judgment of Illinois EPA, there is no need for special warning signs at this site.

Could the plant site cause health problems for nearby residents?

While some work is still being done, the Illinois EPA does not have any evidence that the site is a health hazard for nearby residents.

AmerenIP completed a major Site Investigation Report in December 2007. It showed that most of the contamination found so far is inside the fenced plant site, well below the ground surface. Such contamination does not pose any risk to the public. However, the Report did show contamination below the ground surface in some areas just outside of the site. No contamination was known to be near any homes, but information was not complete. If contamination was close to the surface or near a home or



business, it could be a health hazard. The utility stated in its Report that it needed to study offsite areas carefully to see if this was the case.

AmerenIP sent Illinois EPA a work plan for investigating the area surrounding the site. Illinois EPA and U.S. EPA reviewed and approved the plan. During April and May, based on the approved plan, the utility has been taking soil borings and installing monitoring wells all around the former plant site. Samples are taken from many levels, starting at the surface and going down as deep as 30 feet, to look for coal-tar-related contaminants. The purpose is to give a complete picture of the site's impact on the surrounding area.

The results of the study should be available by late June or early July. A summary Fact Sheet will be sent to the neighbors, local officials, and the news media. The Illinois EPA, IDPH, and U.S. EPA will then look at the off-site sample results to see whether any short-term or long-term health hazards exist. AmerenIP plans to host an Availability Session (Open House) locally so that people can see in detail what the off-site investigation has found. Illinois EPA, U.S. EPA, and IDPH staff will be there to help explain the new findings.

Shouldn't the site have signs warning of contamination inside the fence? What if children get inside the fence and play? Is there a health hazard?

The Illinois EPA and IDPH have been actively responding to these questions since they were first raised about a month ago. In order to say whether contact with site soils inside the fence would cause health effects, we needed to look at contamination in soils near the surface. The Illinois EPA first looked at data from last year's Site Investigation Report and found five samples that were within a foot of the surface. In early May Illinois EPA staff went to the site and took another ten samples of soil from the surface to three inches deep. Illinois EPA's toxicologist, Dr. Tom Hornshaw and toxicologist Cary Ware of IDPH studied the results from these samples. They determined that even very extensive contact with the low levels of contamination found in these samples, even if it went on for many years, would not have a significant health impact. They concluded that here is **no scientific basis** for requiring special "hazard" signs on the property fenceline.

How has the Illinois EPA been overseeing this project?

The Illinois EPA has been overseeing this project since the early 1990's, when Illinois Power (now AmerenIP) entered Illinois EPA's Voluntary Cleanup Program. It has continued under the state's Voluntary Site Remediation Program (SRP), which was created by a law passed in late 1995. The purpose of the program is to make sure that possibly contaminated industrial properties are fully studied and carefully cleaned up in a way that protects community residents and the environment. Under the SRP, Illinois EPA is overseeing work on more than 100 former Manufactured Gas Plants in the state. Forty-three of these are Ameren sites. At this point, nine of the former Ameren plants have been completely investigated and cleaned up under the SRP.

One of the first concerns of Illinois EPA was to make sure that the site could not cause harm to anyone's water supply. Since no area homes or businesses have private wells, and the public water supply wells are too far away to be affected by the site, nobody's drinking water supply is at risk.

Under the SRP, the utility company has submitted work plans and reports to the Illinois EPA for review and has revised its work in response to Agency comments. The Illinois EPA's Project Managers have approved all work being done at the site. They consult with Agency toxicologists, geologists, and other specialists to make sure both public health and the environment are protected in the process.

Under the SRP, after the Champaign site investigation is complete, AmerenIP will propose a cleanup plan for the site. Illinois EPA will review this plan and will ask U.S. EPA to do so as well. If the agencies determine that the plan protects public health and the environment, it will be approved. AmerenIP would then carry out the cleanup under the supervision of Illinois EPA. No schedule has been set, but Ameren expects to do the cleanup next year.

Has any work been done at the site beyond investigating?

In late 1997 and early 1998 the utility removed the most highly contaminated material from the site. They removed about 1000 cubic yards of coal tar and heavily contaminated soil. The main byproduct of the gas manufacturing process was coal tar. Early studies identified many underground structures from the former plant that still contained concentrated coal tar. Cleaning up the most contaminated material from these areas was the purpose of this Interim Remedial Measure. Illinois EPA approved a Health and Safety Plan for this project. Under this plan, air quality was carefully monitored to make sure the nearby residents were protected.

How has the community been informed about this project?

Since February of 1990, the utility has sent out more than 10 news releases, Fact Sheets, or "Updates" about the project. These have gone to as many as 400 homes throughout the neighborhood, local and state officials, interested groups, and local news media outlets. The first public meeting regarding the site was held on September 18, 1990. The Illinois EPA, the utility, and its consultants made presentations and answered questions from local officials and the public. Over the years, the utility and Illinois EPA have regularly consulted with Champaign's Neighborhood Services office and the District 1 City Council member and have kept them informed of plans, activities, and other developments at the site.

At the end of 2007, AmerenIP completed a major Site Investigation Report. A Fact Sheet summarizing the study of present site conditions was distributed to 400 nearby residences and a long list of state and local officials and media. An Open House was held in the neighborhood on January 9 of this year. The Illinois EPA and IDPH were present to answer questions, along with the utility and its consultants.

What if I have other questions about this site?

Illinois EPA plans to participate in a continuing series of local events where residents and other interested parties can get information and express concerns. The City of Champaign is planning an outreach session soon, in addition to the utility's Open House planned for late June or early July.

Repositories: All documents related to the site can be found located at the Douglass Branch of the Champaign Public Library at 504 E. Grove Street. The telephone number of the library is 217-403-2090. Library hours are Monday – Thursday 10:00 AM until 8:00 PM, Friday 10:00 AM until 6:00 PM, Saturday 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM.

The Champaign City Building, located at 102 N. Neil Street, is open from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM weekdays, unless otherwise posted. The report and fact sheets may be reviewed at the Information Desk located in the Atrium Lobby. You may also inquire at the Neighborhood Service Department in the same building or call 217-403-7070.

Illinois EPA's Community Relations Coordinator for this site is: Stan Black at 217-785-1427; mailing address is Office of Community Relations, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, P.O. Box 19276, Springfield, IL 62794-9276. E-mail at stan.black@illinois.gov

U.S.EPA's Community Involvement Coordinator for this site is: Mike Joyce at 312-353-5546; mailing address is Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 77 West Jackson Blvd., P-19J, Chicago, IL 60604. E-mail at joyce.mike@epa.gov

Illinois Department of Public Health's toxicologist for this site is: Cary Ware at 217-278-5900; IDPH Regional Office, 2125 First Street, Champaign, IL 61820. E-mail at Cary.Ware@illinois.gov

City of Champaign Neighborhood Services Department: Mable E. Thomas, Neighborhood Coordinator, 217-403-7070; 102 N. Neil Street, Champaign, IL 61820. E-mail at thomasm@ci.champaign.il.us